

## **Oral History Cover Sheet**

**Name:** K. Duane Norman

**Date of Interview:** April 19, 2006

**Location of Interview:** Shepherdstown, WV

**Interviewer:** Mark Madison

**Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:** 27

**Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:** Student aide at Bear River National Wildlife Refuge working on botulism research project; Fisheries Research Biologist in Woodsville, Massachusetts; Assistant Manager at Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge; Refuge Manager at Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, Illinois; Wildlife Biologist working on Wetlands Acquisition Program; worked on Refuge Acquisition Program in Atlanta; Flyway Biologist in Washington D.C.; Pacific Flyway Biologist in Portland; Chief of Waterfowl Population Surveys Program, from Portland.

**Colleagues:** Dr. Wayne Jensen, Frank Bellrose, John Koerner

**Brief Summary of Interview:** While in college, Mr. Norman served as a student aide at Bear River National Wildlife refuge working on the botulism research program with Dr. Wayne Jensen and upon graduation went to work in Woodsville, Massachusetts as a fisheries research biologist. He then moved on into refuges and would take up flying while working with the Wetlands Acquisition Program in North Dakota. He would make several more moves before retiring as Chief of Waterfowl Population Surveys Program. He shares several stories of his time flying and a memory of Frank Bellrose, whom he felt was interesting to work with.

**Mark:** It is April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006 and we are at the National Conservation Training Center with Duane Norman doing an oral history. And the other person in the room is Mark Madison. And Duane we usually start with the first question, how did you come to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

**Duane:** How'd I come to work?

**Mark:** Yeah.

**Duane:** Man that was about the only place you could be [unintelligible].

**Mark:** [laughing] What was your background before you came to work for Fish and Wildlife Service?

**Duane:** You mean during my school time?

**Mark:** Yeah, what you studied?

**Duane:** I went to what is now called Colorado State University in Fort Collins, which happened to be my hometown, and took up game management; graduated in '56. And before that, the year before I worked as a student aide on Bear River Refuge.

**Mark:** Oh yeah, Utah.

**Duane:** Yeah, with Wayne Jensen working on the botulism program, research program. And then...

**Mark:** What year would that have been?

**Duane:** 1955.

**Mark:** '55 okay.

**Duane:** And in '56 I graduated with a degree in game management. And the only job available was with Public Health in Denver, or, and then I was offered the fisheries research biologist in Woodsville, Massachusetts which I took.

**Mark:** Good choice; Cape Cod's nice.

**Duane:** Yeah. I worked with the sea scarp research. I was the first one to observe the spawning of the sea scarp in the wild, which is pure luck I guess.

**Mark:** So how the heck did you go from fisheries to migratory waterfowl?

**Duane:** Well I wasn't a very good sailor. We had the *Albatross*, which is...

**Mark:** Research Vessel.

**Duane:** ...research vessel, long and narrow like a sea [unintelligible]. Of course we were on eight hour shifts, more or less, at sea anchored out, you know.

**Mark:** Right.

**Duane:** And sit there and just roll and roll and roll.

**Mark:** So you thought planes would be more comfortable.

**Duane:** I said, no I've got to get out of this. So I talked to, I don't know who it was, Salyer I think, and I wrote a letter to him in D.C. asking for any opening in refuges.

**Mark:** Right.

**Duane:** And Forest Carpenter got a hold of me and asked me if I would go out to

Sand Lake Refuge in Columbia, South Dakota. “You bet!” So I was assistant manager there for roughly a year and a half. And then I went to Chautauqua, you know in Havana, Illinois as the refuge manager.

**Mark:** I didn’t know we had a refuge called Chautauqua.

**Duane:** Oh yeah.

**Mark:** In Illinois?

**Duane:** Yeah, it’s right on the Illinois River, the Illinois Natural History Research Center is there, with Frank Bellrose; I worked with Frank.

**Mark:** Okay. So how long were you at Chautauqua?

**Duane:** Four years. Then Harvey Nelson called me and he says, “How would you like to go to North Dakota as a wildlife biologist?” Well that wasn’t very keen, I wanted to stay in management, but I went on up there to work in the Wetlands Acquisition Program. And at that time I took up flying; could see the land and the potholes much better, so I got my private license up there. And transferred down to Atlanta in the Refuge Acquisition Program and that was more or less a dead end; they weren’t acquiring any refuges, or adding to any of them, so. Don Smith, who took Fred Glover’s place, asked me if I wanted to come up there and be flyway biologist; jumped to the fact.

**Mark:** You had enough of Atlanta.

**Duane:** Yeah, went up there and that’s where it all started.

**Mark:** So where was up there?

**Duane:** Washington D.C.

**Mark:** Washington D.C. Interior Building, yeah.

**Duane:** I was there four years, and in 1968 I got married and moved to Portland and was the Pacific Flyway biologist there.

**Mark:** So you worked in at least three of the flyways.

**Duane:** Oh yeah, yeah. And then let’s see, 1977 I was made Chief of the Waterfowl Population Surveys Program, which I served in until I was forced into retirement in 1983.

**Mark:** Did that mean going back to D.C. or did you do that from Portland?

**Duane:** Well they tried to get me back to D.C. and I refused to go, so they relented I guess; ‘cause they had to advertise twice to people, they were trying to get people to go to Washington. I said, I’d been there, done that, I don’t need to come back here.

**Mark:** So what was your job as Chief of Waterfowl Surveys?

**Duane:** Well mainly administrating people, and keeping track of funds and so forth and making assignments to various biologists and so forth. And then getting the waterfowl banding program, running that which we employ about 30 students; we didn’t employ them really, we paid GS 2, I guess I call it, wages and we’d have to supervise them. But generally the flyway biologists were easy to take care

of, satisfy, except there was not; never had enough money to do things, and that was always a big stumbling block.

**Mark:** Are there some memorable instances in your career you care to share?

**Duane:** My flying career you mean?

**Mark:** Yeah, let's talk about your flying career, 'cause you've got a big plane beyond you.

[Laughing]

**Duane:** Well I, let's see the first airplane I had was a hand me down 180 from Horton Jensen. It was a good airplane except the radios the in it weren't the best. The only experience I had with that aircraft that was bad, I was flying IFR back to Washington D.C. and I was above the clouds and so forth in the clear and my radios went out. And I had no navigation at all and the only emergency radio I had was way in the back in the baggage compartment, so I had to keep rolling the trim ahead on it trying to get back there, and it's start up, roll the trim some more. I finally got to it and I got into Fort Wayne, Indiana I guess and they said, after I landed there they said they could tell I was desperate. But I got the radios fixed and went on in to Washington. So with the 210 up at Edmonton Industrial Airport, which is an airport right downtown Edmonton, buildings all around. Took off out of there and blew a jug on the engine, and my heart sank, we're going to crash. Well my observer John Koerner, I believe it was, turned white and [unintelligible] turned downwind and landed just fine.

**Mark:** In downtown Edmonton.

**Duane:** We made it back to the airport.

**Mark:** Did you have any other incidents when you were a pilot?

**Duane:** Well yeah, in 712, which was a 206 Amphib floats; well a couple experiences with that one. Just before the surveys one year I fueled the airplane full, it was an airplane I didn't fly commonly all the time; full of fuel and loaded the observer on and I went out west of Edmonton and there's a big lake out there, said, "Well we'll land here and see how it performs." Well we taxied around a little bit and went to take off, the darn thing would not get in the air; kept running out of space. And we did several attempts, you know, back and forth trying to make waves and so forth that would help us into the air without success. And I said, "John there's only one way we're going to get this out of here and that's if we lighten the load." So I taxied put pretty close to shore and said, "Get out." [chuckled] So he got out and I made a couple of runs and was able to get it off the water, and then I came back in a 180 and landed in the field out there and picked him up there. So yeah, the other incident was with the same 206 flying just at the edge of the bush in northern Alberta, going over to the Coal Lake restricted area, military area. And of course we always flew up to almost tree top level so never really bothered about calling people when we flew through the restricted area. And anyhow we were right on the very edge of it anyway, but all a sudden the engine goes [makes noise]. And my gosh, I said "Well something has to be wrong." I switched tanks and the engine died, switched it back again and it starts

sparking and I said, “We’ve got to land, or we’re going in the trees.” So I called Coal Lake tower and declared an emergency and they cleared us to land there; they were very nice to us and refueled us. It turned out the filter, the gas filter caps were worn out and were venting fuel. And so I spent, I supposed a year’s time explaining that, why I was in the restricted area and why it was necessary to land there. So that’s basically it.

**Mark:** Any memorable people you worked with?

**Duane:** Frank Bellrose.

**Mark:** Tell us about Frank.

**Duane:** Well he was a, he worked with the wood duck. And every year when I was at Chautauqua, he would say, “Well I’m going to finish my book on the wood duck.” As far as I know, he never did finish it, but he kept finding new things in research with it. He was a very interesting fellow to work with.

**Mark:** Anybody else you worked with that sticks with you.

**Duane:** No.

**Mark:** Well anything else you’d like to recount from your career?

**Duane:** Not really I guess.

**Mark:** [laughing] Well then we’re done.

End of interview.